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151509Z May 01

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DINT-00	DODE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01
	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	IIP-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-01	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00
	/010W						

-----EBF372 151503Z /38

FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8880
INFO NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 001620

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR BISA WILLIAMS
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL. 05/07/11

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SUBJECT: OPPOSITION WINS MASVINGO MAYORAL ELECTION

REF: A) HARARE 1584 B) HARARE 1556

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CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES EARL IRVING. REASONS: 1.5
B) AND (D).

1. (U) THE CANDIDATE FOR THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC) OVERCAME A CONCERTED CAMPAIGN EFFORT BY THE RULING ZANU-PF, INCLUDING SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION (REFTELS), TO WIN THE MASVINGO MAYORAL ELECTION MAY 12-13. THE MDC'S ALOIS CHAIMITI, A RETIRED ENGINEER, RECEIVED 4,532 VOTES, WHILE 2,188 VOTES WENT TO JACOB CHADEMANA OF ZANU-PF. THE THREE INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES WERE ONLY A MINOR FACTOR, POLLING 664 VOTES AMONG THEM. ONLY SOME 7,000 PEOPLE OUT OF 27,000 REGISTERED VOTERS CAST THEIR BALLOTS, WHILE MORE THAN 3,000 VOTERS WHOSE NAMES DID NOT APPEAR ON THE VOTERS ROLL WERE TURNED AWAY. CHAIMITI, ZIMBABWE'S FIRST MDC MAYOR, PLEDGED TO WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH THE NINE ZANU-PF REPRESENTATIVES AND ONE INDEPENDENT ON THE CITY COUNCIL FOR THE BETTERMENT OF MASVINGO.

MDC'S REACTION

2. (U) THE MDC LEADERSHIP WAS UNDERSTANDABLY ELATED AT THE OUTCOME. PARTY PRESIDENT MORGAN TSVANGIRAI TOLD JOURNALISTS THE PEOPLE OF MASVINGO HAD SENT A CLEAR MESSAGE THAT "THOSE PARTIES THAT RELY ON VIOLENCE IN THEIR QUEST FOR PUBLIC OFFICE ...HAVE NO PLACE IN THE NEW DEMOCRATIC DISPENSATION...NEVER AGAIN SHOULD THE PEOPLE OF ZIMBABWE LEGITIMIZE VIOLENCE." THE MDC'S NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF ELECTIONS, PAUL THEMBA NYATHI, SAID THE RESULTS DEMONSTRATED THAT ZIMBABWEANS WANT POLITICAL CHANGE. "THIS SHOWS," NYATHI INSISTED, "THAT THE PEOPLE OF ZIMBABWE ARE NOW AWARE THAT THE POWER TO CHANGE IS IN THEIR HANDS."

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REACTION OF GOVERNMENT AND ZANU/PF

3. (U) SAMUEL MUMBENGEGWI, ZANU-PF CHAIRMAN FOR MASVINGO PROVINCE AND NATIONAL MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SPORTS, AND CULTURE, BLAMED THE LOSS ON MDC-PERPETRATED VIOLENCE, WHICH HE SAID HAD SCARED THE RULING PARTY'S SUPPORTERS AWAY FROM THE POLLS, AND ON THE ALLEGEDLY POOR STATE OF THE VOTERS ROLL. THE GOVERNMENT'S CHIEF PROPAGANDIST -- INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY MINISTER JONATHAN MOYO -- DISMISSED THE MDC VICTORY, SAYING WHAT REALLY MATTERED WAS THAT THE CITY COUNCIL REMAINED IN ZANU-PF'S HANDS.

COMMENT

4. (C) WE WERE NOT SURPRISED AT THE LARGE PERCENTAGE OF VOTERS WHO STAYED AWAY FROM THE POLLS, GIVEN THE TENSE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE WHICH PRECEDED THE ELECTION. IN CONTRAST TO THE HISTORICAL PATTERN, HOWEVER, ZANU-PF DID NOT BENEFIT THIS TIME

FROM THE LOW VOTER TURNOUT. THE FACT THAT THE MDC RECEIVED 8,000 FEWER VOTES IN MASVINGO THAN IT DID IN THE JUNE 2000 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, WHILE ZANU-PF'S TALLY DECREASED BY FEWER THAN 1,000 VOTES, IS LIKELY NOT A REFLECTION OF ERODING SUPPORT FOR THE OPPOSITION PARTY. RATHER, MANY MASVINGO RESIDENTS -- THE MAJORITY OF WHOM WERE CLEARLY MDC SUPPORTERS -- TOLD A VISITING EMBASSY OFFICER THAT IT WAS NOT WORTH RISKING POSSIBLE RETALIATION TO VOTE IN THE MAYORAL RACE. INSTEAD, THEY WERE BIDDING THEIR TIME UNTIL THE 2002 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, WHEN THEY PLANNED TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR THE PRIZE WHICH REALLY MATTERED. IN THE SHORT TERM, THE MASVINGO OUTCOME WILL BOOST THE

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MORALE OF MDC SUPPORTERS NATIONWIDE, WHO WILL SEE THAT VICTORY IS POSSIBLE EVEN IN THE FACE OF INTENSIVE INTIMIDATION, AND INDICATES THAT THE MDC MIGHT HAVE THE UPPER HAND FOR NOW IN THE PROVINCE THAT BOTH MAJOR PARTIES CONSIDER CRUCIAL TO THEIR PRESIDENTIAL RACE PROSPECTS.

IRVING

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